

Thoughts on the international communication of Chinese in the new era

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Abstract: With the collaborative efforts of "New Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (hereinafter referred to as the "Belt and Road"), the international communication of Chinese faces both challenges and opportunities. Consequently, the international Chinese education work should be further optimized. Therefore, we should actively explore new paths and models of international Chinese language education, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of Chinese international communication and enable more countries to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and language. In view of this, considering the current situation and trends of Chinese international communication in the new era, this paper will analyze the existing issues in Chinese international communication and propose corresponding countermeasures to address them.

Key words: the new era; Chinese international communication; Chinese language education

1. Current situation and trends of Chinese international communication in the new era

1. The number of international students in China has increased significantly

In the new era, China's escalating international influence has kindled a growing interest in Chinese culture among numerous countries. The visionary Belt and Road Initiative has played a pivotal role in this phenomenon, attracting students from various countries along its path to pursue higher education and immerse themselves in Chinese language learning. Notably, from 2013 to 2021, the number of international students in China has surged to approximately 1.3 million, a testament to the remarkable impact of the "Belt and Road" initiative. The allure of learning Chinese has been significantly magnified, particularly among individuals hailing from Southeast Asian countries along the route. These students have emerged as the principal driving force behind the rising population of international students in China.

2. The rapid development of Confucius Institutes

In the new era, Confucius Institutes are an immensely significant platform and channel for the international communication of Chinese language. The advent of the Belt and Road Initiative has further accelerated this trend, leading to the establishment of numerous Confucius Institutes in various countries, serving as strong pillars for the global promotion and development of the Chinese language. According to the official annual report, in 2013, approximately 440 Confucius Institutes existed worldwide. However, this number has witnessed a remarkable surge, surpassing 1,500 established and operational Confucius Institutes by 2021. This astonishing growth rate is a testament to the increasing recognition and demand for Chinese language learning across the globe. In fact, the number of individuals learning Chinese has now exceeded an impressive 13 million. As Confucius Institutes continue to flourish, the Chinese language is finding its way into the hearts of local communities in many countries, eliciting a strong fascination with Chinese culture. The gradual acceptance of the language and the growing interest in Chinese cultural aspects underscore the positive and thriving trajectory of Chinese international communication in the new era.

3. The demand for Chinese teaching continues to increase

In the context of China's continuous economic growth in the new era, the demand for international Chinese talents has witnessed a steady surge in numerous countries. Chinese entrepreneurs, eyeing overseas markets, have taken the initiative to invest and establish factories abroad, thereby bringing a lot of local job opportunities. Consequently, in response to this growing trend, many primary and secondary schools as well as universities in various nations have proactively introduced Chinese courses and related majors. Even in countries where formal international Chinese education courses may not be available, there is a notable effort to enhance the existing teaching methods and content by integrating a wealth of China-related knowledge into their curricula. Moreover, some Southeast Asian countries have gone a step further and incorporated Chinese into their national education systems. Notable examples include Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Particularly in Thailand, the government has demonstrated unwavering support for international Chinese education through legislative measures, underscoring the importance that many countries attach to promoting Chinese language learning at this stage.

2. Analysis of Chinese international communication in the new era

1. Disconnection between Chinese education and demand in the international community

First and foremost, in the analysis of educational demographics, it is evident that a considerable number of students pursuing Chinese education originate from Southeast Asia and various other countries. However, there exists a notable disparity in the quality and distribution of these students. Among the international students engaged in Chinese language learning, some countries have a relatively small number of students, even fewer than 100, while others boast tens of thousands of students. This uneven distribution poses challenges in achieving a balanced ratio of teachers in international Chinese education, limiting the potential influence of exceptional educators, and impeding the seamless integration of Chinese language education with other nations. Additionally, in the execution of international Chinese education, it is crucial not only to focus on refining Chinese teaching content and methodologies but also to consider the unique circumstances of each country. By drawing upon the knowledge and approaches familiar to the local audiences, we can effectively tailor and adjust the

educational approach based on their diverse needs and backgrounds. This approach will enable us to offer more targeted content and strategies, facilitating a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese thoughts and culture. By adopting this customized and culturally sensitive approach, the impact and effectiveness of international Chinese education can be significantly enhanced. Furthermore, in certain countries, the level of Chinese language proficiency among students remains at the introductory stage, primarily focused on basic skills for everyday communication. However, there is a deficiency in the accumulation of professional vocabulary and expressions necessary to meet the demands of the job market. This misalignment with the actual needs of the professional world leads to a lack of comprehensive and systematic international Chinese education. Consequently, the expected outcomes of international Chinese education are not fully realized, and the optimal value of such education becomes challenging to achieve.

2. The construction of Confucius Institutes has not been effectively aligned with the overall layout

In recent years, many countries have established Confucius Institutes under the guidance of the Belt and Road Initiative. However, their overall planning lacks scientific precision and is marred by significant issues. Firstly, there exists an evident regional imbalance, with numerous countries having inadequate or even no Confucius Institutes. This talent gap has, to some extent, impeded the strategic layout and development of the Belt and Road Initiative. Furthermore, during the implementation of teaching activities in certain countries, Confucius Institutes tend to emphasize language teaching exclusively, neglecting to incorporate professional and technical educational content. This oversight disregards the importance of nurturing interdisciplinary talents and hampers the effective alignment of talent training with the overall strategic layout. This unscientific training approach has affected the teaching effectiveness of international Chinese education, restricted the career development potential of international Chinese talents, dampened the learning motivation of Chinese learners, and diminished their enthusiasm for learning.

3. The teaching staff and teaching materials are insufficient to meet the demands of international Chinese education

Currently, there is a scarcity of Chinese language teachers in many countries attempting to provide Chinese education. A heavy reliance on Chinese teachers dispatched abroad is evident, while the focus on training high-quality local teachers remains insufficient. This imbalance poses challenges to the long-term and sustainable development of international Chinese education. In addition, some of the dispatched teachers may encounter various challenges in their daily lives and work due to their unfamiliarity with the local culture and language. This situation can significantly impede the further optimization of teaching efforts. In terms of teaching materials, many countries have not developed Chinese teaching materials tailored to their specific local conditions. Instead, they heavily rely on importing Chinese teaching materials from China. Consequently, the teaching content may diverge from the local culture and way of life, hindering the understanding and proficiency of local students. This approach significantly impacts the practicality of teaching materials and the actual effectiveness of international Chinese education.

3. Measures for international Chinese communication in the new era

1. Increase policy support and optimize the structure of Chinese education

In the new era, to attract more people to learn Chinese and foster cultural exchanges between China and other countries, the Chinese government has developed and implemented a series of policies pertaining to the global communication of the Chinese language. Additionally, they have established special scholarship support programs in coordination with the "Belt and Road" Initiative. The effective implementation of these policies has significantly boosted the enthusiasm and motivation of foreign learners to engage in Chinese language learning, while also greatly enhancing the efficiency of international Chinese communication in the new era. Considering the uneven distribution of students, China offers preferential policy support to certain developing countries. This approach aims to attract individuals more effectively from these nations to participate in Chinese language learning and promote the communication of Chinese culture. By doing so, China aims to establish a strong foundation for the development of these countries and foster the global reach of Chinese cultural influence.

In addition, to further strengthen the impact of Chinese education in the new era, we can further optimize the educational content. By considering the specific circumstances of different countries, we can introduce more specialized and targeted teaching materials, leading to a structural adjustment of international Chinese education and enhancing its educative effect. In practice, we should integrate Chinese language teaching with professional knowledge in fields such as economy, trade, tourism, transportation, finance, and communication. This approach aims to elevate the overall competence of Chinese learners and equip them with considerable proficiency in Chinese language expression and a deep understanding of Chinese culture, enabling them to better adapt to market demands after completing their Chinese language studies. Additionally, we should emphasize strengthening interdisciplinary talent cultivation by deeply integrating Chinese language teaching with relevant disciplines. By breaking away from the limitations of traditional single-discipline education, we can actively integrate high-quality educational resources from both domestic and international sources. This will facilitate the realization of a "Chinese language + N" educational model, where students can pursue dual degrees or dual certificates. Through such approaches, we can enhance the level of talent cultivation in international Chinese education and produce more versatile and high-quality Chinese language professionals.

2. Adjusting strategic priorities and rationally planning the objectives of Confucius Institutes

When considering the development layout of international Chinese language education, it is essential to consider the national strategic development plan and industrial framework. Making corresponding adjustments to international Chinese language education activities in alignment with these plans will enable the cultivation of more high-quality talents who can effectively meet the needs of the current times and society. In the context of the new era, the layout of Confucius Institutes has shifted its focus to the Middle East, West Asia, and other regions that possess crucial advantages in energy and economy. However, the existing presence of Confucius Institutes in these countries is

limited, and the investment is insufficient. As a result, the level of international Chinese education in these regions is not fully developed, and the training process of local Chinese talents is restricted to some extent. To address this, we should adjust our strategic focus in a timely manner and plan the layout of Confucius Institutes more effectively. By attracting more countries to participate in international Chinese education, we can contribute to the local economic development by nurturing talents and accumulating strength. This will lay a solid foundation for achieving cooperative and mutually beneficial partnerships between China and countries along the "Belt and Road" initiative, infusing new vitality into the development of this region.

In practice, we can establish development objectives from the following three levels: the short-term objective is to integrate international Chinese education into the national education system of select countries; The medium-term objective is to make Chinese an effective language tool in specific fields of certain countries; The long-term objective is to achieve widespread and diverse application of the Chinese language in various scenarios, gaining broad acceptance and usage among local populations in certain countries. The short-term objective primarily targets countries that possess a certain foundation in Chinese but have not yet introduced Chinese courses in their primary and secondary schools, such as Laos and Myanmar. The medium-term goal is aimed at countries that have already integrated Chinese education into their national education systems but require further enhancements in the international standard of Chinese education, such as Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal, and others. To achieve the long-term goal of international Chinese education, our focus should be on building an economic and trade circle centered around the Chinese language, where Chinese becomes the main common language in as many countries as possible. This will ensure effective communication between languages and peoples, thereby elevating the international status of Chinese and aligning the discourse power of Chinese with China's economic strength.

3. To strengthen collaboration between China and other countries, and to promote the localization of teaching staff and teaching materials

To enhance the effective spread of Chinese language and elevate the standard of local Chinese education, it is crucial to establish local educational resources. While dispatching overseas teachers, efforts should be made to assist in the training of high-quality local teachers proficient in international Chinese teaching. Furthermore, tailored and scientifically designed teaching activities should be conducted based on the specific characteristics and requirements of different countries and students, thus enhancing the overall quality of international Chinese education. In terms of textbooks construction, countries and individuals engaged in Chinese language teaching should reduce their reliance on Chinese teaching materials. Instead, they can use Chinese teaching materials as references or guidelines and conduct secondary optimization based on local realities, students' requirements, industrial developments, customs, culture, regional characteristics, and more. This approach effectively ensures that international Chinese teaching materials align with the specific needs of local students and facilitates the process of localization for teaching materials.

In conducting international Chinese teacher training, countries can not only conduct their own training activities but also engage in regular and in-depth cooperation and exchange with various Chinese educational institutions. By doing so, these teachers can acquire the latest international Chinese education concepts and methods. This process gradually nurtures a group of seed teachers who, upon returning to their respective countries, can inspire more educators to embark on new teaching endeavors, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of international Chinese language education. Additionally, leveraging Internet technology, Chinese teachers can utilize online platforms to engage in communication and resource-sharing with teachers in other countries. By exchanging ideas and sharing Chinese teaching resources, this approach significantly enhances the overall standard of international Chinese education.

In the compilation of localized teaching materials, each country should give full play to the expertise of both Chinese and foreign teachers, drawing upon their respective strengths to collaboratively create high-quality teaching materials. This joint effort provides robust support for subsequent international Chinese language teaching initiatives. During textbook compilation, efforts should be made to cater to the needs of students at various levels and from different majors. Furthermore, teachers from different countries can collaborate with local enterprises and cultural institutions to expand the content of teaching materials, promoting the localization process of Chinese teaching materials. This approach elevates the standard of Chinese education and teaching in their respective countries, propelling it to new heights.

To sum up, we can take several steps to enhance the impact of international Chinese communication in the new era. Strengthening policy support and optimizing the structure of international Chinese education is essential. Additionally, adjusting strategic priorities and planning the layout of Confucius Institutes in a rational manner is crucial. Furthermore, fostering cooperation with foreign countries and promoting the localization of teachers and teaching materials are vital to advancing the international spread of Chinese in the new era. These efforts will not only improve China's image in the international public opinion environment but also provide momentum for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the establishment of a community with a shared future for mankind.

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